



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 169

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023

No. 66

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who rules the raging of the sea, we exalt Your Name because, in spite of the chaos and confusion in our world, You remain the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. We will continue to praise You for as long as You permit us to borrow our heartbeats from You. Lord, use our law-makers to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Lift up the heads of all who place their trust in You.

And, Lord, we praise You for the life and legacy of Dr. Charles Stanley, who was in touch with You, enabling him to touch the lives of millions.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 20, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the issue of avoiding default, yesterday, Speaker MCCARTHY made it clear how unprepared Republicans in the House are to resolve our Nation's default crisis.

With a default approaching, Speaker MCCARTHY yesterday capitulated to the MAGA right and rolled out a partisan wish list masquerading as legislation. This MAGA wish list has no chance of moving forward in the Senate, and it doesn't move us any closer than we were yesterday to avoiding default.

To quote one hard-right conservative House Republican:

The leadership just picked up the House Freedom Caucus plan and helped us convert it into the legislative text.

That shows you how hard right this wish list truly is.

Again, let me quote one of the most well-known hard-right conservatives in the House:

The leadership just picked up the House Freedom Caucus plan and helped us convert it into the legislative text.

Wow. That is what Leader MCCARTHY is doing—maybe not as a surprise after what happened with the many votes he needed to get elected.

Americans who look at this package will overwhelmingly agree: The biggest losers in Speaker MCCARTHY's agenda are parents, kids, law enforcement, small businesses, and countless others who work hard every single day to make ends meet.

Do you want to talk about reducing debt? Wall Street billionaires are not asked to pay even a nickel under MCCARTHY's bill. Hurt the parents. Hurt the kids. Hurt law enforcement. Hurt small businesses, but leave the billionaires alone. That is what MCCARTHY is doing over there in the House.

Let me say that again. The biggest losers in Speaker MCCARTHY's blueprint are parents, kids, law enforcement, small businesses, and countless others who work hard every single day to make ends meet. Wall Street billionaires are not being asked to pay a nickel. Americans will not accept this transparently unfair and draconian package.

If these MAGA cuts become law, it will decimate everything ranging from food nutrition programs to funding for mental health, opioid addiction, and childcare. Parents who need help buying groceries and baby formulas will see their out-of-pocket costs go up. It is so cruel and heartless that parents who get \$6 a person a day to feed their families would see it disappear. Can you imagine? Can you imagine?

If this MAGA wish list becomes law, untold thousands of clean energy and advanced manufacturing jobs could leave our shores and go to China.

This MAGA wish list will also make Americans less safe by slashing funding for the Department of Justice by billions of dollars and eliminating tens of thousands of law enforcement positions nationwide. We hear a lot of talk from the other side about helping the police.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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This helps defund them, this legislation.

Donald Trump called for Republicans to defund law enforcement, and now Republicans seem to be following through. The wish list will further punish middle-class taxpayers and reward tax cheats by slashing funding necessary to go after ultrarich tax cheats while raising taxes on the middle class by depriving them of many of the new tax credits aimed at the middle class that we passed—we Democrats passed—during the last Congress.

You heard me right. This MAGA wish list punishes middle-class taxpayers while rewarding ultrarich tax cheats.

It is clear what is going on here: Speaker MCCARTHY cobbled together all sorts of extraneous measures in order to try and pass something, anything, no matter how extreme. But these extraneous measures—and they are truly extreme—have no place in a debate about avoiding default.

If Republicans truly wish to sell their extreme agenda to the American people, they should not do so in the middle of discussions to avoid default. There is a time and place to debate that, not during this debate, because what they are doing is dangerous to the country.

In the meantime, the solution to resolving the debt limit crisis has not changed. If Republicans want to avoid causing a first-ever default, they should do what we did three times under Donald Trump and twice under President Biden: work with Democrats to avoid default without brinksmanship, without blackmail, without hostage-taking, and without extraneous demands that nobody in America would want to accept, hardly anybody at all.

Speaker MCCARTHY's wish list is an extreme step in the wrong direction. It heads us in the direction of default, and time is running out.

WOMEN'S AND VETERANS' RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, next on women's rights and veterans' rights, for weeks, the senior Senator from Alabama has threatened American security by blocking over 180 routine military promotions because he objects to women in the military accessing reproductive care.

Yesterday, the Senator from Alabama's objections came before the Senate for consideration through a resolution that would have eliminated reproductive care for our veterans and their families. Senator TUBERVILLE lost the vote. Senator TUBERVILLE lost, while our women veterans won.

Yesterday's vote made two things very clear: First, MAGA Republicans are so hellbent on eliminating reproductive choice that not even veterans and our generals are safe. Americans have made abundantly clear that they reject the hard right's anti-choice agenda, but MAGA Republicans still double down.

Second, the Senate has now spoken on Senator TUBERVILLE's anti-choice

proposal and said no—one of the few instances where a CRA has been voted down in the Senate and, in this case, with bipartisan votes against it.

The Senate has spoken. Senator TUBERVILLE has zero excuse for blocking 180 military promotions. His objection has been presented, considered, and rejected on a bipartisan basis. He should drop his holds against our military personnel and move on.

I urge my Republican colleagues who care about our national defense and about our veterans to talk some sense into our colleague from Alabama so he can drop his dangerous holds.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, next on the FBI, a few weeks ago, former President Donald Trump called on Republicans in Congress to defund the Department of Justice and FBI because of personal grievances. Instead of standing up to President Trump, Speaker MCCARTHY and Republican leaders have been silent, and some Members of their party even echo the former President's call.

That is why today I am introducing a resolution denouncing President Trump's call to defund the DOJ and the FBI. The Senate will act on this measure as soon as next week.

The resolution is simple. It expresses our support for Federal law enforcement, and it condemns Donald Trump's call to defund the DOJ and FBI and any other partisan attempts to undermine their authority.

When the resolution comes to the floor, every Member of this Chamber will have a chance to do the right thing: stand up for the brave law enforcement who keep us safe and reject the former President's dangerous call to strip away their funding.

I hope the resolution passes unanimously. It certainly should.

The DOJ and FBI do critical work to protect our communities from threats at home and abroad, including drug trafficking, gun violence, terrorism, and so much more. Do Republicans really want to cut their funding, the funding of these Agencies, making it harder for them to do their jobs?

Again, where will Republicans stand? Will they stand with the Federal law enforcement who keep us safe or stand with the former President and his dangerous call to defund Federal law enforcement? The American people deserve to know how radical the hard right has become, and this resolution will give them answers.

FIRE GRANTS AND SAFETY ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the Fire Grants and Safety Act, later today, the Senate will pass a much needed lifeline for our firefighters, the Fire Grants and Safety Act.

I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their good work on this overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation.

Passing the Fire Grants and Safety Act will extend two important Federal grant programs that support our paid and volunteer firefighters—SAFER and AFG.

As we approach the fire season, extending SAFER and AFG is crucial to ensuring that firefighters have life-saving equipment and personnel necessary to do their jobs. This is particularly true in smaller, more rural, more suburban areas where volunteer firefighters staff the firehouses, but the equipment is hard to purchase for smaller and less wealthy communities.

Our firefighters are brave. They risk their lives for us. They run toward danger, not away from it. They work tirelessly around the clock, often in dangerous and unpredictable conditions, putting their lives on the line to keep us safe. Firefighters have had our backs, and passing the Fire Grants and Safety Act today will show we have their backs too.

I was proud, in my early days in the Senate, to work with Senator Dodd to pass this legislation.

Again, I thank my colleagues. This has been an example, again, just like we did a few weeks back on the AUMF, of how the Senate should work—bipartisan. We worked with our Republican colleagues and the ranking member of the relevant committees to allow Republican amendments, and, in turn, our Republican colleagues are supporting us moving forward on this important legislation. It is a good thing, and I hope this model continues. As leader, that is one of the things that I am trying to do.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF JULIE A. SU

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, well, the Biden administration's reckless economic policies have hurt American workers and families right from the beginning. Right from the start of their one-party government, Democrats used party-line votes to light trillions—trillions—of dollars on fire and supercharge inflation that is still hammering the country right up to the present.

After 2 years of reckless policies and human pain, the American people voted for checks and balances. They